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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000311

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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN UNION OPERATIONS CENTER COMES ON LINE

REF: A. 05 BRUSSELS 01197 B. 05 BRUSSELS 01164 C. 04

BRUSSELS 04937 D. 04 BRUSSELS 04686

Classified By: USEU Pol-Mil Unit Chief, Jeremy Brenner, for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Summary. The European Union Operations Center was declared operational January 1, 2007. It is designed to plan and run an autonomous military operation of approximately 2000 personnel. In practice, the Ops Center will also be used to run civilian and integrated crisis response missions. End summary.

12. (C) Members of the USEU pol-mil team were invited to tour the newly-completed EU Operations Center on January 11 in conjunction with announcement of its full operational capability. Lt. Colonel Patrick Geysen (protect), the head of the small permanent staff of the operations center and Roland Zinzius (protect), Deputy Director of the Civ-Mil Cell gave details about the capabilities of the Ops Center and likely next steps in developing European Union crisis response planning.

13. (SBU) According to the terms of reference for the Operations Center, it will be capable of planning and running a military operation on the scale of the ARTEMIS operation in Bunia, DRC in 2003. In practice, this means a mission of approximately 2000 personnel, which, not coincidentally, is the size of the EU Battlegroups also declared fully operational on January 1 2007. Because the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) takes a "holistic" view of crisis response, the civ-mil cell, of which the Ops Center is a component part, includes civilian experts in police, rule of law, civil protection, civil administration, and representatives from the European Commission which is responsible for humanitarian assistance, and development aid. EU doctrine is that the military capabilities under ESDP are designed "to make the other instruments more effective." Battlegroups are being advertised to the UN and others as a "bridging force" designed to conduct the full range of Petersberg peacekeeping tasks, then handing off to a larger follow-on force. In the event of a deployment, a Battlegroup is supposed to be capable of tasks ranging from providing logistical support or a "safe and secure environment" for civilian teams to separating warring factions by force.

14. (C/NF) According to Geysen, the European Union Operations Center was declared fully operational on January 1. This date is a full year behind the original schedule (refs A-D), and there was very little public fanfare regarding its completion. USEU was invited to tour the facility even before Member State representatives on the Political and Security Committee had seen it, highlighting the political sensitivities that remain within the EU concerning the purpose of the Ops Center, the circumstances under which it might be employed, and U.S. attitudes towards the development of EU crisis response capabilities.

15. (C) Geysen and other members of the EU Military Staff have argued to us on many occasions that the construction of the Operations Center facility was driven by a desire to avoid duplication and waste within the EU. Geysen pointed specifically to the 5 million Euro satellite communications link constructed for the Ops Center, saying that such a link would have to be duplicated at each of the current and proposed National HQs made available for EU autonomous operations. This satellite link will permit the Ops Center to be in permanent contact with all of the ESDP missions - civilian and military - now deployed. Geysen went on to say that one of the lessons learned from the ESDP mission to the DRC completed in November 2006 was that the training and travel required to bring operational staff to the Multinational HQ was both disruptive and expensive. The German OHQ at Potsdam which planned and ran the DRC operation was far from the political decisionmakers, and from those EU Military Staff experts who created the initial Crisis Management Concept and Initiating Military Directive. He also said that the need to coordinate with civilian crisis management elements who might already be on the ground argued for an Ops Center in Brussels with civilian representation.

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There is currently discussion within the EU on establishing a civilian "OHQ" which would need to be fully integrated with any military OHQ.

16. (C) Geysen is a member of the "core staff" of the Operations Center. This staff, consisting primarily of "housekeepers" who maintain the communications and computer equipment until the Ops Center is activated by a decision of the European Council, is responsible for standing up the center and bringing in the augmented staff from the EU Military Staff and seconded national experts from capitals. Geysen explained that there is now a database of trained national experts who would be called upon in case of activation of the Ops Center.

17. (SBU) The Ops Center and the augmentation system will be exercised in June during MILEX 07 in Sweden. The scenario for the exercise will postulate a request from the UNSC for the deployment of an Integrated Police Unit and "bridging force" to respond to an emerging crisis in Africa. One of the goals of the exercise will be to ensure effective linkages with civilian crisis management elements, either on the ground or with planners in Brussels.

18. (C) The Ops Center itself consists of 64 work stations with computer and communications links. A video wall will be installed shortly. The Ops Center is designed to provide 24 hour watch capability as well as operational control over deployed missions. Civilian missions are currently run by a small staff within the Civilian Crisis Management directorate in the Council Secretariat. Cell phones and email are the primary means of communication. Within the Ops Center spaces there are empty offices designated for augmentees from the Military Staff and Member State capitals. Geysen suggested that in the event of a Battlegroup deployment, the lead nation would be given additional identified staff slots which would otherwise be filled by EU Military Staff officers.

19. (C/NF) Comment: The civ-mil cell staff was clearly proud of their newly-completed facility. That it exists at all is

seen as a major achievement given that it is the product of the hard-fought political compromise that defused the 2003 Trevuren OHQ controversy. In the minds of the professionals manning the Ops Center, it is only a matter of (short) time before the political leadership will want to "take their new Ferrari out of the garage." By NATO or US standards, it seems more like a basic model Renault than a Ferrari, and there is some question whether they will have the staff to run 24-hour operations. Still, given the political necessity of justifying the resources represented by both the Battlegroups and the Ops Center, we anticipate they will be used. Such a deployment, if channeled and orchestrated carefully, could help refine an additional - if limited -- resource for rapid international response to crises. To the extent that the Ops Center can focus and run the disparate elements of EU crisis intervention tools, thereby ensuring European engagement, this new capability, could prove useful, especially in theaters where no other international security actor is readily able to intervene.

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